EVOLVING COMMUNITIES, EVOLVING FAITHS: A THREE-ARTICLE SERIES ON HISPANICS AND RELIGION IN NORTH CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

EVA HENDERSHOT: Evolving Communities, Evolving Faiths: A Series of Articles on Hispanics and Religion in North Carolina

(Under the direction of Dr. Richard Cole, Professor Jan Johnson Yopp and Dr. Karolyn Tyson)

The Hispanic population in North Carolina grew 80 percent in 2000-08, mostly because of immigration. Church is at the center of many of these Hispanic immigrants' lives. In three long-form news articles, this thesis explores the dynamic relationship between Hispanics and their churches. The market for these articles is North Carolina news publications. The first article is about St. Julia's Catholic Church in Siler City. It explores the challenge of integration and the church's expanded role in Hispanic members' lives. The second article tells the story of St. Julia's Charismatic Renewal group and gives background on the movement in the Raleigh diocese. The third article discusses Hispanic conversion to evangelical faiths through the story of La Iglesia Bautista Comunidad en Cristo, a Southern Baptist Hispanic Mission in Graham, N.C. Sidebars about funding struggles for Catholic Hispanic ministries and the stances of major denominations on immigration reform accompany the articles.

To my parents and grandparents, who have always supported me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the past 20 years, the number of Latinos in North Carolina has exploded. In 1990, Latinos made up just over 1 percent of the state's population. In 2008, at 682,459, they made up 7.4 percent of the population, an increase from 4.7 percent in 2000. While the state's population as a whole increased just under 15 percent between 2000 and 2008, the Latino population increased 80 percent during that same time period, according to U.S. Census data.

These staggering numbers have not been lost on journalists, scholars or policymakers over the past decade. The influx of Latino immigrants to the state has been well-covered by media, academics and political pundits. However, one need not pick up a newspaper or listen to a political speech for proof of this migration. Evidence abounds statewide. *Tiendas* have popped up on rural highways in places like Alamance County as well as on city blocks in the state's urban centers. Many informational signs are now written in English and Spanish, such as town government in Carrboro.

Amid these more visible signifiers of Latino immigration to North Carolina exists another significant marker of cultural and demographic change – the prevalence of churches catering to Latinos. From Roman Catholic churches with Spanish and bilingual services to Protestant

evangelical churches formed by Latinos, the religious landscape of North Carolina is changing as Latinos become a larger portion of the state's population.

The purposes of this thesis are to add to the understanding of Latino immigrants' experiences and to examine relationships between these immigrants and native members of a community through the lens of churches. For many immigrants, church is a focal point of their new lives in the United States. Furthermore, the relationship between religious institutions and immigrants is dynamic. Not only do churches affect the lives of their immigrant members, but immigrants affect the culture and structure of their churches. And what occurs inside the walls of a church is informative for understanding what is happening in the wider community.

Background: Pew Study

In 2007, the Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life jointly released the results of a survey study called *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Changing Face of American Religion*. The study, which consisted of a series of bilingual public opinion surveys collected from more than 4,600 participants, amounted to one of the largest ever conducted on the subject of Latinos and religion in the U.S. The results demonstrated the distinctive quality of Latino religious practices and beliefs as well as the impact of these beliefs on the political and civic life of Latinos (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007).

In a press release about the study, Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, articulated the significance of the results in the effort to understand the lives of Latinos in the U.S.

"The major findings in this study leave little doubt that a detailed understanding of religious faith among Latinos is essential to fully appreciating the evolving nature of religion in the United States and of the role Latinos will likely play in the country's politics and public life," he said (2007).

Because the Pew Study is the only comprehensive study of its kind, the results provide a good background for the issues of Latinos and churches.

Sixty-eight percent of Latinos identify themselves as Roman Catholics, while 15 percent consider themselves born-again or evangelical. Almost 10 percent do not identify with any religion (Pew, 2007).

Overall, regardless of the denomination of Christianity Latinos belong to, their religious practices and traditions are distinct from those of non-Latinos. The Pew study found that practices associated with Pentecostal and the Charismatic Renewal Movement– such as speaking in tongues and talk of being guided by the Holy Spirit – prevail in Latino Catholic and Protestant church services more so than in non-Latino services (Pew, 2007). The Charismatic Renewal Movement (also referred to simply as the charismatic movement) is based on a New Testament passage. The passage refers to direct divine inspiration, which members communicate by speaking in tongues. The belief in healing powers is also prevalent in the charismatic movement (Newman, 1992).

Within the Catholic church, more than half of Latino members consider themselves to be part of the charismatic movement, compared to only one-eighth of non-Latinos. A similar distinction occurs in Protestant churches. More than half of Latino Protestants identify themselves as renewalists (a catchall term for charismatics and Pentecostals), compared to only one-fifth of their non-Latino Protestant counterparts (Pew, 2007).

The emphasis on spirit-filled worship among Latinos – coupled with the fact that Latinos make up an ever-increasing portion of the Catholic church – has changed the culture and practices of Catholic churches across the U.S. However, the Catholic church has been losing its tight grip on Latinos in the United States as growing numbers of Latinos have converted to

evangelical churches. Nearly one-fifth of all Latinos in the U.S. have converted to another religion or to no religion at all. This conversion rate directly feeds into the growth of Latino evangelicals. More than 40 percent of Hispanic evangelicals converted from Catholicism (Pew, 2007).

Another important finding of the study illuminates the ethnic cloister within which Latinos worship. Two-thirds of Latino worshipers attend Spanish services with Latino clergy and mostly Latino congregants. This tendency exists even among Latinos born in the U.S. Forty-eight percent of native-born Latinos reported that they attend ethnic churches. The Pew researchers maintain that this "ethnicoriented worship" and the distinct style of Latino religious worship "leave little doubt that a detailed understanding of religious faith among Latinos is essential to understanding the future of the population as well as the evolving nature of religion in the United States" (Pew, 2007).

Literature Review

Latinos are among the most religiously active immigrants in the United States. In a study published in 2008, sociologists Alenezi and Sherkat compared the religious rates of current immigrants to past immigrants. They also compared predictors of religious participation among different immigrant groups in the U.S. While immigrants overall had similar religious participation to non-immigrants in the U.S., those with ties to Christian groups and the Catholic church were found to be much more active than other immigrants. In a related vein, Alenzi and Sherkat found that hailing from a Catholic nation, as do Latino immigrants, proved to be one of the primary indicators of a high level of religious participation among immigrants in the U.S.

Several prominent themes emerge within the literature on Hispanics and religion in the U.S. The effect of Latinos on Catholic churches and the growing popularity of mainline Protestant and evangelical faiths among Latinos demonstrate the impact that this group will continue to have on religion in the U.S. Journalists and scholars have also covered the religious trends among native- born Latinos, the political impact of their religious choices and the transnational nature of immigrant religions here. A review of newspaper articles and scholarly literature on these themes follows.

Latinos' Effect on Catholic Churches

One aspect of Latinos' religious practices that has received a fair amount of attention by scholars and journalists concerns the major impact that they have had on the Catholic church in the U.S. Latinos make up approximately one-third of all U.S. Catholics, and as Latinos continue to immigrate to the U.S., that portion is expected to climb for decades to come (Pew, 2007). In areas of the U.S. that have been overwhelmingly Protestant traditionally, such as the Southeastern states, the portion of Latino Catholics is even greater. Marti Maguire from the *News & Observer* in Raleigh wrote in a 2009 article about Hispanic Catholics that, by some estimates, Hispanic Catholics outnumber non-Hispanic Catholics in North Carolina by a 2-to-1 ratio.

The late Joseph Fitzpatrick is considered one of the pioneering sociologists of the Catholic church. Throughout his career, he paid particular attention to the process of Latino immigrant transitions to U.S. Catholic churches.

"The Hispanic population may well give a particular character to the Catholic Church in the United States during the 21st century, as the Catholic immigrants from Europe gave their

particular character to the Church during the present century," he wrote (Fitzpatrick, 1987, p. 125).

Fitzpatrick framed the Catholic church's situation as the "current crisis for inculturation" that parallels the nation's current process of assimilation (p. 125, 1987). While he noted in the beginning of his book that Hispanic Catholics will bring changes to the church in similar ways that European Catholic immigrants did in earlier centuries, he stressed that attempts to compare the two groups of immigrants much further fell short. He wrote that Hispanic Catholicism is inherently more rooted in personal relationships and community than the Catholicism brought over to the U.S. from Europe.

In an article published in the *Journal of American Ethnic History* in 2004, Mary E. Odem wrote that, as a result of organization and protests of Latino clergy and lay leaders, the Vatican and the U.S. Catholic church have become more responsive to Latino immigrants over the past several decades. One way the Second Vatican Council set out to make the church more accessible to Latino immigrants was by promoting greater acceptance of culturally diverse expressions of faith (Odem, 2004). Given Latinos' preferences for a distinct, spirited style of worship, their effect on Catholic parishes throughout the country has been, and will continue to be, considerable.

In December 2009, the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University in New York put on a forum, "Becoming Latino: The Transformation of U.S. Catholicism." The Rev. Allen Figueroa Deck, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' secretariat of cultural diversity, moderated. Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life, was a panelist. Deck and Lugo emphasized study of the charismatic renewal movement to understand Hispanics and religion. A conference transcript reveals the following exchange:

"The Charismatic Renewal has been a tremendous boon for the Catholic Church, and particularly the Latino church," Lugo said.

Deck agreed: "I believe that the reality of charismatic Catholicism is an underreported story. I think it can be shown that there are more Latino Catholic charismatics than there are Latino Pentecostals."

Multiple national newspaper articles have described the changes in Catholic religious customs as a result of the church's efforts to accommodate its Latino parishioners. In 2002, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Catholic church initiated the inclusion of charismatic movements within some Latino parishes to provide their members with a "more lively, cathartic style of worship" than is typical in most U.S. Catholic churches (Porter, 2002).

In a 2002 *Washington Post* article, staff writer David Cho reported the number of Catholic charismatics as a whole diminished from 500,000 in 1985 to 200,000 in 2002, but that the movement continues to grow wherever Latino immigrants settle. Religious scholars agree that, had the Catholic church not made this effort to include charismatic practices in their parishes, it would have lost a large percentage of its Latino population to Protestant churches (Cho, 2002).

Cho also wrote that, as churches have become more hospitable to charismatic services, some non-Hispanic members have begun trying them out. He described an English-speaking healing Mass in Virginia. For many of the non-Hispanic attendees, it was their first charismatic style service. Cho contrasted the service to a charismatic Hispanic service held at the same church just days earlier. At the Spanish service, attendees shouted in unison, waved their arms in the air dramatically, danced and sang along to "ear-deafening" music. Someone even began speaking in tongues. Attendees at the English service, by contrast, sang traditional hymns and

did not dance or shout. They did line up to receive healing from ministers and then fell to the floor, a practice not typical in non-charismatic Catholic services (Cho, 2002). So, even though the Hispanic charismatic service differed starkly from the English service, the growing accessibility of Catholic charismatic services exposed non-Hispanic parishioners at this church to a new worship style.

However, in the same article, Cho also reported that the church's endorsement of the charismatic movement has not gone over smoothly among all parishes. The Rev. Franklyn M. McAfee, head pastor of a Catholic church in Great Falls, Virginia., told Cho that many priests in the Diocese of Arlington do not allow charismatic gatherings within their churches because they feel that the movement goes too far in expressing emotionalism. McAfee allows English-language charismatic services occasionally because they are calm, but he does not allow Spanish charismatic gatherings because he does not like the excited worship style – jumping up and down, specifically – that typically characterize them (Cho, 2002). The *Washington Post* article referenced earlier also reported that priests and religious scholars consider Hispanic culture to be more expressive, which feeds their religious preferences (Cho, 2002).

Decisions of whether to allow displays of traditional Latin American devotions within a parish also provide important clues of an individual church's policy toward Latino immigrants. In her article about La Misión Católica de Nuestra Señora de Las Americas, a Catholic mission comprised primarily of Hispanic immigrants in Atlanta, Odem described the décor of the church. It contrasted with mainstream Catholic churches in the area because of its prominent display of regional devotions prevalent in Mexico and Central America (Odem, 2004).

Integration is the official position of the Atlanta Archdiocese, Odem wrote. Integration is one Catholic institutional approach to dealing with Latino immigrants. According to this

approach, immigrants should be integrated into established English-speaking parishes. The establishment of La Misión Católica, with its prominent display and practice of traditional Hispanic religious customs, challenged this official policy (Odem, 2004). Decisions about whether to integrate Latino immigrants will likely occupy Catholic churches as the Latino population grows.

Fitzpatrick pointed out that Hispanics are the first group of Catholic immigrants to come to the U.S. without their own clergy. This fact has put the U.S. Catholic clergy in a challenging situation – one in which they "must minister to a large population of different language, different cultural background, and different social class" (Fitzpatrick, 1987, p.152).

Evangelical and Mainline Protestant Movement among Hispanics

Because of the different expectations that Hispanic immigrants have of their churches, perhaps it is not surprising that journalists and scholars have also focused on another aspect of Latinos and religion in the U.S. – the increasing number of Latino immigrants leaving the Catholic church to join evangelical and mainline Protestant churches. Marti Maguire, staff writer for *The News &Observer,* wrote an article in 2009 about Hispanic Catholics turning to Protestant evangelical worship in the Research Triangle. She focused on Comunidad Cristiana Hosana, a Hispanic Pentecostal church in Raleigh. Immigrants who grew up in the Catholic faith comprise most of the church's congregation. Maguire reported that Comunidad Cristiana Hosana is just one of dozens of similar Hispanic protestant churches that have popped up around the Triangle in the past 15 years. Researchers, she wrote, have identified a "worldwide shift" from Catholicism toward evangelical faiths among Hispanics (Maguire, 2009).

Even within North Carolina, the movement from Catholicism to Pentecostalism among Hispanics has been occurring for more than a decade, as evidenced by a 1999 article in the

Winston-Salem Journal. Reporter John Raily described how Hispanic Catholics in central North Carolina had formed their own Pentecostal churches. He reported from multiple Hispanic Pentecostal churches in the area and interviewed members and priests about their decisions to shift their faiths. Like Latinos mentioned in other articles, they expressed their desire to feel more emotionally connected to God, something they felt Pentecostal churches are more apt to facilitate (Raily, 1999).

One reason for this shift, according to Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, is that, after they have been in the U.S. for a few years, immigrants take on the U.S. tradition of choosing among a plethora of religious faiths. More choices for religion exist in the U.S. than in their home countries (Maguire, 2009). Another reason for this change is the increasing popularity of evangelical faiths in many of the immigrants' home countries in Central America. Maguire tells of an immigrant from Honduras who was exposed to evangelicalism in her youth but did not switch over from Catholicism until she moved to the U.S. in her adulthood (2009).

Fitzpatrick argued that the relative absence of national parishes – Catholic parishes in which all members share a nationality – has left Hispanics particularly vulnerable to Pentecostal movements. Smaller, more intimate Pentecostal churches can provide the comforts and sense of community that Hispanics may not get otherwise (Fizpatrick, 1987).

The desire to feel as though they are a part of a tight-knit community comes up often in Latinos' explanations for joining smaller Protestant or evangelical churches. In an ethnographic essay about a Hispanic evangelical movement in Los Angeles, Luis León sought to determine what conditions made possible the existence of Alcance Victoria, a group of 24 Spanish-language churches within a mostly English-language evangelical church movement. One group

that he paid special attention to were the "lapsed Catholics." These church members cut their ties with the Catholic church and joined Alcance Victoria because they were actively pursued by church members. Most of these former Catholics said they stayed with the evangelical church because it provided them with a sense of community and belonging that they lacked otherwise (León, 1998).

The active recruitment by Protestant and evangelical churches in Hispanic communities has been a major factor in the conversion from Catholicism among Latinos. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2002 that the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.) had approximately 2,200 Latino congregations (Porter, 2002). In 2006, journalist Danica Coto reported in the *Charlotte Observer* that the Southern Baptist Convention intended to recruit 50,000 Hispanics by 2011 and build 250 new churches yearly (Coto, 2006).

The longer Latinos have been in the U.S., the more likely they are to leave the Catholic church. Not surprisingly, then, the tendency to join evangelical and mainline Protestant churches prevails most heavily among second and subsequent generations of Latino immigrants. Only 15 percent of first-generation Latinos identify as Protestants. By the third generation, that percentage nearly doubles to 29 percent (Ramirez, 2009). The challenge that the Catholic church faces in remaining relevant to Latinos who were born here, as well as the appeal of non-Catholic faiths among younger Latinos, remain topics of research worth pursuing further.

The shift to evangelism could have an impact on political affiliation among Latinos, who voted heavily Democratic in the 2008 presidential election (Preston, 2008). According to a study published in 2005 in *Political Research Quarterly*, Latinos affiliated with evangelical and mainline Protestant churches more readily identify with the Republican party than do Catholic

Latinos (Kelly & Kelly). In a 2006 *Washington Post* article about the political effect of evangelism among Latinos, staff writer Sonya Geis quoted Edwin Hernandez, director of the University of Notre Dame's Center for the Study of Latino Religion, as saying that Pentecostal and evangelical Latinos tend to be much more conservative than Catholic Latinos (Geis, 2006.) The fact that Latinos voted in large numbers for President Obama in 2008 does not eliminate the possibility that in future elections Latino evangelicals could sway the Latino vote by voting in high numbers for Republican candidates.

As Latino influence grows within the evangelical movement, its leaders could play a major role in calling for more lenient immigration policies. In 2009, Margaret Ramirez of the *Chicago Tribune* reported evangelical church leaders in the Chicago area who have begun calling for immigration reform. In October 2009, the National Association of Evangelicals, which represents approximately 45,000 churches in the U.S., implored the Obama administration to establish a process for undocumented immigrants to become legal (Ramirez, 2009).

Transnationalism in Immigrant Faiths

In books and scholarly articles about Latinos and religion, the transnational nature of immigrant religion has received a lot of attention. "Transnational" religious ties refer to connections in religious practices and beliefs that span political and cultural borders (Stepick, 2005). Immigrants in the U.S. bring with them practices from their home countries. And today's Latino immigrants, aided by the technological innovations that ease communication and travel between the U.S. and Latin America, take practices and beliefs they have acquired in the U.S. back to their home congregations.

In their book *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks*, sociologists Helen Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz identified a clear reciprocal pattern between Latino immigrants

in Texas and their native countries. Ebaugh and Chafetz interviewed members of 13 immigrant congregations in Houston. It became clear through the interviews that a circular pattern existed in which the immigrants brought religious practices from their homelands and adapted them to their lives in the U.S. The immigrants then communicated to family and friends they left behind, which influenced the religious structures and practices in their native communities. Ebaugh and Chafetz concluded that this circular pattern helped prepare future immigrants for religious institutions and life in the U.S. (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002). The sociologists emphasized that this reciprocal religious pattern has a major impact, not just on religious institutions, but on societies worldwide.

"The transnational religious networks in which the new immigrants participate…play a central role in the global, transnational world of the 21st century," they wrote (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002, p.190).

In a prior study published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, however, Ebaugh and sociologist Fenggang Yang identified ways in which immigrant churches in the U.S. often differ from churches in their home countries. For example, immigrant churches in the U.S. tend to allow much more lay involvement by members. Because immigrants join churches voluntarily in the U.S. (rather than attending the church they were born into), their activity within the church is likely more of a conscious choice than in their home countries. Immigrants more readily assume leadership roles in their U.S. churches, and immigrant churches often double as recreational and educational centers. Another important difference between immigrant churches in the U.S. and immigrants' native churches concerns the heightened level of inclusiveness in U.S. churches. Hispanic immigrant churches, especially, tend to be comprised of people of multiple nationalities (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001).

A related issue to that of transnationalism is hybridity in immigrant religion. Marie Marquardt explored hybrid religious practices in two Hispanic churches in Doraville, Georgia. Marquardt opened her ethnography of a Lutheran and a Catholic Hispanic church by describing each church's approach to celebrating Halloween. The Lutheran church held a traditional U.S. costume party. Many members came dressed as *la negra* ("the black lady"), a well-known character in folklore of the Mexican region of Guerrerro (Marquardt, 2005, p.189). The Halloween party allowed members to fuse their own customs with a U.S. tradition. Marquardt wrote that this practice prepared members to be part of "a multicultural America" (190.) The Catholic church made no mention of Halloween. Rather, it had an altar commemorating the Day of the Dead, a widely celebrated holiday in Mexico. Marquardt wrote that the Catholic church's omission of a traditional Halloween party encouraged members to challenge U.S. customs and norms and to form a "politicized pan-Latino" identity (190). While their approaches differed significantly, each church maintained ties to its members' home communities, forging new cultural and religious hybrids within their congregations and shaping the immigrants' relationships to their new host community of Doraville (Marquardt, 2005).

The Expanded Role of Religion in the Lives of Immigrants

For many immigrants, the role of religion and their churches extends beyond a few hours each Sunday. Ebaugh and UNC-Chapel Hill sociologist and migration scholar Jacqueline Hagan emphasized the importance of religion in the actual migration process of immigrants. In a case study on a group of Pentecostal undocumented Maya who journeyed from Guatemala to Texas, they found the church's role before, during and after the journey to be considerable (Ebaugh & Hagan, 2003).

Often the decision of whether to make the journey came down to the advice or premonition of a Pentecostal pastor, and religious activity heightened while the Maya prepared for their arduous trip. During the journey to Texas, migrants communicated with their pastors in Guatemala. The pastors counseled migrants and also contacted family in the U.S. or helped deal with authorities when a migrant was apprehended. And upon their arrival in Texas, a Pentecostal church was usually the first organized structure the migrants encountered. These churches helped the migrants acclimate to their new community by providing social and economic support (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003).

In an article about the role of religion on the lives of modern immigrants in the U.S., sociologist Charles Hirschman pointed out that, in addition to meeting their spiritual needs, ethnic churches in the U.S. provide immigrants comfort by performing customs of the home country. And their emphasis on community service compels churches to help immigrants, who often need social and economic support. Hirschman wrote: "Just as many immigrants come to learn that they are ethnics in the United Sates, a significant share of immigrants also "become American" through participation in the religious and community activities of churches and temples" (p. 1207, 2004).

Research Questions

While journalists and scholars have covered many issues related to Hispanic immigrants and religion, gaps in coverage exist, particularly on the sensitive issue of ethnic and cultural integration in churches. I plan to pursue the following questions in series of articles:

- How is the change with Latinos and religion playing out in a rural setting that has traditionally not been ethnically diverse?

- What is the perspective of Catholic clergy? How are they personally trying to minister to Hispanic congregants? What challenges do they face, and how are they dealing with these challenges? Do they feel pressure to change traditional practices to keep Latinos from joining evangelical and mainline Protestant churches?
- How do non-Hispanic church members feel about changes that have taken place in their churches as the result of the growing Hispanic population? Do they make an effort to reach out to the Hispanic members?
- Are churches trying to integrate their Hispanic and non-Hispanic congregations? What kinds of barriers or successes have they encountered in that process?
- What role does a charismatic group play in a single church? How has the movement been perceived by Catholic leadership and non-charismatic Catholics? What appeal does the movement have for Hispanics?
- What role have churches played in the debate over immigration reform?
- Do churches play a different role in the lives of immigrants than in the lives of non-immigrant members?
- How do Hispanic and non-Hispanic services compare within a single church?

Methodology

My methodology consisted of the traditional news-gathering process of interviewing, observing and researching.

Observations

Most of my observations at St. Julia's Catholic Church took place in September and October 2009. During those months, I attended one Sunday morning Spanish Mass, three Sunday morning English Masses, one Saturday evening bilingual Mass and one diocese-wide Spanish Saturday evening charismatic service. I also attended the St. Julia's Parish Festival. In February 2010, I attended a Sunday Spanish charismatic rosary service and Mass. In February and March 2010, I attended a Spanish service at Iglesia Bautista Comunidad en Cristo Hispanic mission in Graham, North Carolina, and an English service at the First Baptist Church of Graham. During the services, I sat in the congregation and took thorough notes of my observations. During the festival, I watched performances with other parishioners and visited different booths, taking notes of my observations the entire time. I typed up my notes after each observation.

I chose St. Julia's and the Graham church and mission to observe because I wanted to see how the issues I planned to explore played out in a rural setting that has not been ethnically diverse traditionally. I decided to focus on one Catholic church and one Baptist church rather than multiple churches from each denomination. My reasoning for this choice was my belief that an in-depth examination of a single church would provide a better understanding of issues occurring in Catholic and evangelical churches everywhere than a superficial study of numerous churches. I chose a Southern Baptist congregation for my third story because North Carolina Baptist (the state association of the Southern Baptist Convention) is one of the primary

denominations in North Carolina, and the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest single body of Baptists in the U.S.

Interviews

I interviewed 17 people for this thesis. With the exception of three, I conducted interviews in person at the interviewee's office, home, public meeting place or church. I conducted the other three over the phone because the interviewees lived too far away for me to travel to them. Occasionally, I followed up interviews with phone calls or e-mails to fill in gaps and answer questions that occurred to me after the interviews.

Most interviews lasted about one hour each. I selected people to interview based on the type of information I needed to tell the stories I wanted to tell. For each interview, I typed a set of questions beforehand. The typed questions served as a guide, but I improvised as needed, always asking additional questions as new ideas surfaced during interviews. I used a digital voice recorder to record each interview. I asked permission before recording, and all interviewees readily gave me permission to record. I jotted down notes during the interviews and transcribed audio recordings afterward.

As I wrote my articles, I found I needed statistical and other types of information not available through my interviews and observations. I used the Internet to find U.S. and state government sources, official church documents and scholarly work. I evaluated the sources carefully to ensure their reliability and authority before including them in my articles. A list of these sources is in the bibliography.

Limitations

No series of articles is truly exhaustive. There are always more questions a journalist could ask, more people to consult, more places to observe. We have to work with the resources

available to us. I aspired to write my articles to the best of my ability with the resources I had, but, as always, there were limitations.

The biggest limitations were my lack of fluency in Spanish and my lack of research funds to hire a translator. Therefore, I had to work with what I had, which was a limited proficiency in Spanish. This proficiency allowed me to follow along in church services, but my lack of fluency prevented me from truly understanding sermons and conversations in Spanish. Most importantly, it prevented me from being able to conduct interviews in Spanish. Instead, I relied on people who were bilingual. Unfortunately, this shortcoming meant that the voices of Hispanic immigrants who do not speak English – often the most in need – do not come out directly in my articles. I tried to ease this limitation by asking my interviewees about the experiences of non-English speaking immigrants. And I knew that most of the Hispanics I interviewed had at one time been newly arrived immigrants who spoke little or no English themselves. As a result, the perspective of this group of immigrants wasn't lost in my articles.

Lack of funding also limited the places I could travel to cover Hispanics and religion. This factor was not a crippling limitation because I wanted to focus on nearby rural areas, but visiting charismatic conventions in North Carolina and surrounding states or attending conferences about Hispanics and religion surely would have added to my thesis.

Despite these limitations, I feel confident that I reported the stories with the respect and fairness they deserve.

Article Summaries

Market and Overview

My thesis is a series of long-form feature articles about Hispanics and churches in North Carolina. The market for this series is local news publications such as *The News & Observer* in Raleigh or the *Independent Weekly*, with the understanding that articles may need to be shortened or broken into smaller articles.

Article 1

The first article explores the complex relationship between Hispanics and the Catholic church in North Carolina through the story of St. Julia's Catholic Church in Siler City. St. Julia's began as a small non-Hispanic mission in 1961 but has grown to be a predominantly Hispanic parish of more than 700 families. This article explores challenges of integration at St. Julia's and the expanded role of the church in the lives of Hispanic immigrants.

Sidebar

A 250-word sidebar describing results of a study released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in February 2010 accompanies the first article. The study found that Catholic Hispanic ministries nationwide suffer from a lack of funding.

Article 2

The second article tells the story of the Charismatic Renewal at St. Julia's and in the Raleigh diocese. Charismatic Renewal is a religious movement popular among Hispanics. It emphasizes the Holy Spirit and encourages animated worship. The article describes its popularity among Hispanics nationally as well as challenges it has faced.

Article 3

The third article explores the movement of Hispanics away from Catholicism by focusing on Iglesia Bautista Comunidad en Cristo, an Hispanic mission formed by four Southern Baptist churches in Alamance County. It describes reasons for conversion among Hispanics and the challenges of integration in the Southern Baptist Convention and other denominations. It also examines the funding relationship and ensuing power struggles between non-Hispanic churches and the Hispanic missions they sponsor.

Sidebar

A 500-word sidebar listing the official immigration-reform positions of major denominations in the U.S. accompanies the third article.

CHAPTER TWO

A Church in Flux

Teresa Aldahondo remembers walking through Fuquay-Varina's tobacco fields in the springtime, carrying food and her Bible. Her priest and other bilingual volunteers joined, intent on ministering to Hispanic migrant workers, newly arrived for the growing season.

"Father Charlie would say Mass for the migrants, and then we would give them a little snack and, if we had a nurse, look at their wounds," she said. "Or we would just talk to them."

That was in 1988, when the Catholic Hispanic ministry in North Carolina was more likely to occur in a field than a sanctuary. Now more than 60 churches in the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh have Spanish Masses. Aldahondo, 65, who lived in Puerto Rico until age 12 and then Long Island, N.Y., until moving to Raleigh at 43, has served as consultant for the diocese's Hispanic ministry since 1992.

In 1990, Hispanics comprised just more than 1 percent of North Carolina's population. In 2008, they made up 7.4 percent. In 2000-08, the Hispanic population increased 80 percent, according to U.S. Census data. And a 2007 study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life noted that 68 percent of Hispanics in the U.S. identify

themselves as Roman Catholic. So it is no surprise that almost two-thirds of Catholic churches in the Raleigh diocese conduct Spanish Masses now.

At a 2009 Fordham University forum on Hispanics and religion, Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, described the Catholic Church as a barometer for social and cultural issues in the U.S: "Just like economists talk about leading economic indicators, the Roman Catholic Church is a leading demographic indicator. You want to see where the country is going to be, the country as a whole, in 40 years? Look at the Roman Catholic Church today. It's really quite remarkable. It's what I affectionately call 'the browning of America.'"

As North Carolina's Hispanic population changed from migrant workers to year-round immigrants, Aldahondo saw this evolution unfold in her own church, St. Michael's in Cary.

"We grew from about 40 bilingual people to now 800 people every Sunday at Mass," she said.

The relationship between Hispanics and their churches is complex and important. With more than 64 million members, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest single body of Christians nationwide, largely because of immigration. According to the Pew Religious Landscape Survey, approximately one-third of Americans who were raised Catholic no longer identify as Catholic. But the loss has been offset by Catholic immigrants. In turn, they depend on the church for more than spiritual needs. For many Hispanics, church is the center of their community in North Carolina and, to some, one of a few places they feel safe in an increasingly hostile environment.

When different cultures gather under one roof, challenges inevitably arise. North Carolina's Catholic churches and parishioners, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, find themselves

at a critical moment. They must deal with challenges to serve two kinds of parishioners: white, nonimmigrants who tend to be middle-class, and Hispanics, many of whom struggle to get by.

Take St. Julia's Catholic Church in Siler City. While it has a character and story of its own, it reflects churches all over North Carolina as they adapt to changing demographics.

A Church Transforms: St. Julia's

Siler City, a town of about 8,500, is 50 miles east of Raleigh, in rural Chatham County. Chicken-processing factories originally attracted many Hispanic immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s. The latest available Census data for the town showed that almost 40 percent of the population was Hispanic in 2000.

St. Julia's sits on a prime piece of former farmland visible from U.S. 64, about five miles outside the city limits. The building turns heads. Its yellow stucco exterior, red roof and courtyard look like buildings and churches in the Southwest and Mexico. The sanctuary's bell tower reaches toward the sky, almost overshadowing silos on the hill behind the church.

Aldahondo has visited St. Julia's regularly since her early days as consultant for the diocesan Hispanic ministry. Her already big brown eyes grew even wider when she told of changes in the church in the past 15 years.

"St. Julia's is big now, but you should have seen it before," she said. "It used to be nothing. It was just a little thing across from the hospital."

The church began as a Franciscan, non-Hispanic mission in 1961. Eight families attended. By 1980, it grew to 35 families, all non-Hispanic. Today more than 700 families attend, and 75 to 80 percent of St. Julia's parishioners are Hispanic.

The Rev. Jim Fukes became pastor in 2006. The associate pastor is the Rev. Pedro de Oliveira. Neither is a native Spanish speaker (Oliveira is of Brazilian descent), but they have become proficient by studying the language. It's not always easy, though.

"I have to relearn some things and pick up new vocabulary," Fukes said. "But I'm understanding it more from more people. It just takes time."

Some weeks, Fukes conducts the Spanish Mass. Other weeks Oliveira does.

Until 2001, St. Julia's was a small, nondescript building in downtown Siler City. Audrey Schwankl, 44, of Pittsboro, began attending the church in the 1990s when the Rev. Dan Quackenbush was priest. By the late '90s, the church's growing pains had become impossible to ignore.

"When the Hispanics started arriving, it started to get really crowded," Schwankl said. "People were standing up and all along the walls and in the back and pushing out the back door."

The church started Spanish Masses, but "even those became incredibly crowded," she said.

So under Quackenbush, the building committee planned a new church. Walter Bunton, a non-Hispanic parishioner, donated land. Jim Spencer, a young architect eager to work on a challenging project, got the job to design the building. The building committee, which consisted of Hispanic and non-Hispanic parishioners, requested that it reflect Hispanic culture.

"At the time, people would make comments that it's weird to have a Spanish-style building in that area, but it wasn't weird, really," Spencer said. "These are settlers just like settlers from England not that long ago. They built it in their style, and now these people are building it in their own style more or less."

Hispanic and non-Hispanic parishioners stayed involved throughout the building and planning process. Spencer remarked how eagerly the non-Hispanics embraced the church's new style.

"It was a pretty extraordinary gesture for people that had been the owners or patrons of the church for 40 years to build a new church for these immigrants, basically," he said. "That made an impression on me."

Isidra Benitez, a Hispanic parishioner who lives in Ramseur, about 12 miles west of Siler City, beamed when she spoke of the new church.

"Everybody gets so excited about the big building," she said. "A lot of people from other religions tell us it's a beautiful building, and I say, 'Yes it is.'"

Although the building remains a point of pride for parishioners, Schwankl, the longtime attendee, sees a negative effect.

"It's so big that it doesn't have that feeling of family and community," she said. "The new church has not been conducive to community, as far as I can tell. I feel like we are treading water most of the time."

Barriers to Community

Whether an Hispanic ministry occurs in a tobacco field or a sanctuary, community is important.

In St. Julia's new building, Sunday consists of Spanish Masses at 8 a.m. and noon and an English Mass at 10 a.m. A handful of bilingual Hispanics attend the English Mass. Otherwise, minimal interaction between the English-speaking and non-English speaking parishioners occurs.

"That's always going to be a challenge," Aldahondo said. "We try to tell people there's got to be integration if we're going to be happy."

Mary Grace McCoy, 41, of New Silk Hope, has attended St. Julia's for four years. She said the parish council wants more interaction between Hispanics and non-Hispanics.

"We're working really hard on activities to bridge cultures, like the annual St. Julia's festival," she said.

The festival started in 2006 and occurs annually in the fall. The 2009 festival took place on a warm, sunny late-September day. Loud Latin music and the smell of tacos and pizza filled the air.

During the Festival Infantil (Children's Festival) portion, children showcased their talents on stage under a large tent to a jovial seated audience. One highlight was a performance by three Hispanic children, all under age 6. The mostly Hispanic audience clapped and laughed adoringly as the kids performed a choreographed dance to Hannah Montana's "Nobody's Perfect." Later a Hispanic girl ignited the crowd by clogging to the John Denver hit, "Thank God I'm a Country Boy." Afterward, a brown-haired girl in a fancy white dress and sash reading "Reina Juvenil 2009" (Youth Queen 2009) handed each performer a rose.

The Rev. Fukes brought up the festival as an example of non-Hispanic and Hispanic parishioners getting together. But in a sea of hundreds of Hispanics, only about 15 to 20 non-Hispanics appeared.

Schwankl, the non-Hispanic parishioner from Pittsboro, served as the bilingual emcee for the event. She chalked up the meager non-Hispanic attendance to different cultural expectations.

"When Hispanics go to an event like that, they want to be entertained," she said. "They want to sit and watch a show." Last year's festival and show lasted longer than six hours.

"The music is loud, the show is loud, and people are just sitting and watching," Schwankl said. "It lasts so long that no Anglo is going to sit there that long."

Other cultural issues have come up at the festival. The first year, non-Hispanic parishioners held a bake sale with cakes, cookies and pies. The sale flopped.

"We didn't sell anything," Scwankl recalled. "Hispanics think that our sweets are too sweet. And so nothing sold."

They also organized a silent auction to raise money for the church.

"I think it was something they [Hispanics] hadn't experienced," she said. "They didn't know what a silent auction was."

Although Schwankl made this observation in good humor, it's difficult to imagine that the non-Hispanic parishioners didn't feel wounded at the failure of their efforts. To be sure, non-Hispanic parishioners always play a vital role in organizing the festival, as Benitez, the Hispanic parishioner from Ramseur, pointed out.

"They know who get the better deal – we just tell them what we need and they say, 'Here it is,'" she said. For example, when the Hispanic parishioners realized they needed a large tent, they asked the non-Hispanics where to get one.

But when it comes to participating and coming together to build a bridge, cultural and language differences form a staunch barrier.

Perhaps most striking is the difference between the English and Spanish Masses.

English Masses at St. Julia's tend to be quiet. Two white parishioners provide acoustic music on guitar and piano. They sing calmly as parishioners trickle in for the 10 a.m. service, which typically draws 150 to 200 people, mostly adults. Order and structure prevail.

Leidi Canales, 19, of Asheboro, attends Spanish services with her family and speaks wistfully of the English Mass's structure.

"I prefer the English services because they're so organized," she said. "If I were in charge of the Spanish Mass, that's how it would be."

The Spanish Masses are more improvised. People come and go from the sanctuary. Children cry and often restlessly leave their parents' seats to visit others. A band plays electric guitars, keyboard and tambourine to get the congregation going. People clap and sing along. During the Eucharist, parishioners mill around the sanctuary, and the number of people attending typically doubles that of the English Mass.

Even though Benitez and her family speak and understand English, they stick to the Spanish Mass.

"Only if we have no choice do we attend that [English] Mass," she said. "It's not the same. We like to understand what we're doing. Also, I don't feel comfortable with four kids, making noises, because it's a lot of old people there. And they only have one child, and I have four. So we always take the back seat (when we attend the English Mass.) Maybe that's another reason we don't attend that Mass – because they are so quiet."

When talking about services, almost everyone mentions the high number of children in Spanish Masses. According to the Pew Research Center, more than 50 percent of Catholic newborns in the U.S. are Hispanic, and that percentage is expected to climb.

On the flip side is Schwankl, the non-Hispanic parishioner who emceed the festival. She speaks Spanish and has many Hispanic friends yet still doesn't consider the Spanish Mass a desirable option.

"I probably would not attend those because they're very crowded," she said.

Such cultural differences may become more acute as the Hispanic population grows.

Diocesan leaders see the issue as pressing. Ricardo Veloz, director of the Pastoral Juvenil – the Hispanic youth ministry of the Raleigh diocese – said: "We're planning at the diocesan level and also at parishes to bring the English and Spanish together. The bishop is clear. He say, 'In the future, your office will be part of the [non-Hispanic] youth ministry.'"

Beyond Spiritual Needs

One reason integration at St. Julia's and other churches is so important is because of the expanded role churches play in the lives of Hispanics. During Aldahondo's days in the tobacco fields, she and other volunteers didn't stop at reading scripture to the migrant workers. They fed them, nursed wounds and gave social support. Similarly, St. Julia's pervades the lives of its Hispanic parishioners for much longer than the two hours of Sunday Mass.

"It's their social center," Fukes said. "The English people, however, come for Mass, talk a little bit and then go home."

Fukes thinks this approach is partly the result of the different realities immigrant and native parishioners face.

"[Non-Hispanics] have a lot of other activities outside their home that they're involved in," he said. "The Spanish don't feel safe driving far from home because many don't have valid driver's licenses. So they drive to work and church, and that's it. So they hang out here."

Like many Catholic churches, St. Julia's offers services beyond Masses, such as English-as-a-second-language classes.

When she first noticed an increase in Hispanic parishioners, Schwankl set up a booth outside the sanctuary to help Hispanics navigate social services and immigration issues. Recently Fukes stumbled upon a meeting between a Hispanic parishioner and an immigration

lawyer. Fukes asked the lawyer for a few business cards so that he could refer more parishioners to him.

And as the bleak economic situation in Siler City persists (several major chicken plants have closed in recent years), Hispanic parishioners come to the church as a last resort for financial help.

"The majority come last to the church (for financial assistance)," Fukes said. "But you feel pressure to pay because the lights are turned off, the children are at home, and there's no heat or electricity." St. Julia's received a diocesan parish-assistance grant this year to deal with such requests. But when money isn't enough, Hispanics seek another kind of support from the church.

"Sometimes they'll ask us to bless the truck that they're going back to Mexico in," Fukes said.

Reinvigorating a Mission

In February 2000, David Duke, the high-profile former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, visited Siler City at the request of Richard Vanderford, a disgruntled white resident whose license plate read "Aryan." Duke and others stood in front of City Hall and railed against the Hispanic immigrants. That night the Spanish side of the St. Julia's church sign (which was still at its old location downtown) was smashed.

The next day St. Julia's held a community gathering to talk about racism and how the community could come together.

"I think people in the community viewed St. Julia's at that time as a leader in social justice," Schwankl said. "We cared about Hispanics. We were sheltering Hispanics and helping them through this difficult time."

Since that time, Schwankl fears the church's growth has stretched people so thin that they have lost this sense of mission.

St. Julia's is not alone in its quest for equilibrium. Other churches in the Raleigh diocese find themselves walking the same fine line. On a grander scale, communities across North Carolina will continue to struggle, seeking balance that fosters community among Hispanics and non-Hispanics, for years.

Aldahondo keeps fresh the memory of the ministry's meager beginnings in the North Carolina fields while looking forward to the future. She knows as well as anybody that finding the right balance will be difficult but worth the payoff.

"I've seen a lot of progress, but it's messy," she said. "You need to learn about each other so that you can work together."

Sidebar

Money Woes for Hispanic Ministry

In February 2010, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released results of a study assessing Catholic Hispanic ministries. Conducted by the Institute of Policy Research and Catholic Studies of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., it found that Hispanic ministries nationwide suffer from lack of funding and high personnel turnover.

Most funding for Hispanic ministries comes from tuition, workshop or membership fees. Dioceses and churches provide the second-largest source of funding. And although almost two-thirds of Hispanic ministries seek funding, less than half have a finance committee or an organized fundraising program. Few have endowments, and most have been unsuccessful in fundraising. Sixty percent of the ministries surveyed have an annual budget of less than $50,000 each. Only half have full-salaried directors.

Catholic leaders know these difficulties must be resolved for the church to support its growing Hispanic population.

"The major challenge in nearly all Hispanic ministry organizations is the curtailment of their mission due to severe lack of fiscal and consequently personnel resources," said Tim Matovina, director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at Notre Dame.

"Bolstering the structures that sustain Hispanic ministry is one of the most urgent strategic goals of Latino Catholic faith," he said.

CHAPTER THREE

A Lively Movement

"Con tus manos, con tus pies, gloria con Jesus! Gloria con Dios!" ("With your hands, with your feet, glory with Jesus! Glory with God!")

It's Valentine's Day 2010 at St. Julia's Catholic Church in Siler City, and Adolfo Trinidad, the newly elected charismatic group leader, bounces up and down in the light-filled sanctuary, telling everyone to show physically his or her love for Jesus. About 30 Hispanic adults and 10 children obey by jumping, clapping, waving hands in the air and singing. The group's band pounds out modern praise music on electric guitars, drums and keyboard.

Seventy-five to 80 percent of St. Julia's parishioners are Hispanic. A growing number are part of the Charismatic Renewal, a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that emphasizes the Holy Spirit and encourages an animated style of worship. St. Julia's all-Hispanic charismatic group, or prayer group, meets every Sunday afternoon in the sanctuary

This group reflects an important trend among Hispanic Catholics. According to the Pew Center on Religion and Public Life, more than half of Hispanic Catholics identify themselves as charismatic. This number compares with only one-eighth of non-Hispanic Catholics. In addition, more than half of Hispanic Protestants are part of the movement.

In December 2009, the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University in New York put on a forum, "Becoming Latino: The Transformation of U.S. Catholicism." The Rev. Allen Figueroa Deck, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' secretariat of cultural diversity, moderated. Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life, was a panelist. Deck and Lugo emphasized study of the charismatic renewal movement to understand Hispanics and religion.

"The Charismatic Renewal has been a tremendous boon for the Catholic Church, and particularly the Latino church," Lugo said.

Deck agreed: "I believe that the reality of charismatic Catholicism is an underreported story. I think it can be shown that there are more Latino Catholic charismatics than there are Latino Pentecostals."

An Exuberant and Personal Service

Leidi Canales, 19, of Asheboro, attends the St. Julia's charismatic service every week. Her family, which is of El Salvadorian descent, helped start the group after moving to rural Chatham County from Long Island, N.Y., in 2003.

"We came here because God told my Mom to," Canales said.

This earnest statement is typical of charismatic followers. The charismatic movement takes direction from a Bible passage in First Corinthians that lists spiritual gifts. Sometimes called "charismatas," they range from the expected gifts of knowledge and faith to what many consider sensational gifts of tongues and healing powers. When charismatic followers speak of relationships with God, they emphasize a deeply personal and emotional connection.

"Whenever people have problems, they come to a service" Canales said. "They often have really bad situations. It shows them how to interact with God, shows them that it's OK."

Canales's mother Lucy is a St. Julia's group leader. At 3 p.m., before the main charismatic service, she gathered with about 15 other followers in a small room to the side of the sanctuary. There they held a charismatic rosary service. Sunlight beamed through the stained-glass windows and cast a warm glow as they recited the rosary fervidly, beads clutched close to hearts, hands raised, eyes closed:

"Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte. Amen." (Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.)

At 4 p.m., they joined others in the sanctuary for the main service, which often runs more than two hours. The St. Julia's sanctuary is large and open, with shiny faux-clay tile floors and red-cushioned wood pews that seat 450. Natural light streams in through windows that line the side walls. A candle shrine for Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, stands to the left of the pews.

In some ways, the charismatic service resembles Sunday Spanish Mass. A band playing Latin-style hymns on electric guitars and keyboard leads the congregation in peppy Spanish songs. Children crawl under chairs and sneak into the aisles. No non-Hispanic parishioners attend.

But fewer than 10 minutes into the service a conga line forms. A woman in the front row grabs people sitting near her and directs them to follow in a single file, hands on one another's shoulders. The line bounds zealously toward the back aisle, collecting people as it snakes around the sanctuary. At one point, a young mother leads the line, holding her baby in one arm and waving her other arm in the air. Those who haven't joined the line clap enthusiastically. A woman in blue jeans and a red sweater dances with her toddler. Everyone beams.

About midway through the service, Trinidad, the leader, asks all "niños" (children) to join him. About 10 children scamper to the front. They huddle. The adults raise their hands toward the children and pray aloud.

After the prayer, Isidra Benitez, who along with her husband, Hilberto, is involved in the charismatic group, leads the children to a classroom, for the Benitezes' youth group. This move marks a pivotal point in the service. Once the children leave, the adults feel less inhibited about showing emotion.

"We take kids away from the grownups," Isidra Benitez said. "Because sometimes we pray for people. And people start crying, and the kids don't understand this."

In the second half, people pray more fervently, sometimes crying. They stand arms outstretched, palms up, eyes closed. Or they look up and pray in their own words. Many different voices fill the sanctuary.

During the final minutes, Trinidad calls forward anyone who needs prayer. Six adults go to the front and kneel. Trinidad preaches emotionally in the background, clasping his microphone with both hands. Lucy Canales and another leader float their hands over the kneelers' heads and pray.

Leidi Canales – Lucy's daughter, well versed in charismatic traditions – watches from a back pew. She explains that only people approved by the charismatic ministry can lay hands over people. The belief is that leaders must be spiritually prepared to prevent evil spirits from being transmitted.

Legitimizing Charismatic Worship

When the Canales family first came to St. Julia's in 2003, only a handful of people participated in the charismatic group. The Canaleses got others involved, and now a typical

Sunday service draws between 30 and 50. Most attend St. Julia's regularly, but the service also attracts Hispanics from other churches.

The Rev. Jim Fukes, pastor, and the Rev. Pedro de Oliveira, associate pastor, do not attend charismatic services regularly, but they approve of the group. In fact, the formation of a charismatic prayer group in the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh requires approval from the priest. This approval is only one diocesan requirement in what many construe as an effort to maintain control and legitimacy of the charismatic movement.

"We work under the authority of the bishop," Jackie Tucci emphasized in a phone conversation. She and her husband, Tony, came to Raleigh from Florida, where they served as full-time directors of Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Diocese of Miami until 1996. In 1998, they found themselves in the same role in Raleigh, where they still serve as charismatic directors.

On one hand, the Catholic church must allow and encourage the growth of charismatic groups to keep Hispanic parishioners. With 64 million members nationwide, the Catholic church is the largest body of Christians in the U.S. If it weren't for immigrants, however, its numbers in the U.S. would be shrinking. Sixty-eight percent of Hispanics in the U.S. are Catholic, according to the Pew Study.

But the church's hold on Hispanics isn't absolute. Nearly one-fifth of Hispanics in the U.S. have converted from one religion to another, and 80 percent of Hispanic evangelicals who have converted left the Catholic church. A majority of Hispanic evangelicals who left the Catholic church say the typical Mass is not lively or exciting according to the Pew study.

Teresa Aldahondo, 65, of Raleigh, is a consultant for the Raleigh diocese's Hispanic ministry. She says these numbers concern the Catholic leadership.

"Hispanics are leaving the Catholic church because they are more attracted to the Pentecostal way of worshipping," she said. "Sometimes Hispanics come here and find that our churches are cold – they don't move and they don't shake."

While the charismatic prayer groups allow Hispanics to worship vibrantly without abandoning Catholicism, the Raleigh Catholic leadership can't afford to alienate its traditional noncharismatic base. Tucci's point about the bishop's authority over Charismatic Renewal comes as no surprise when viewed in light of the notoriety that charismatic groups have gained among many Catholics. In the 1970s – the early days of the Charismatic Renewal in Raleigh – the diocese's leadership expressed skepticism and concern about the movement. It felt uncomfortable with the haphazard nature of it.

"Prayer groups met in homes, here and there and all over the place, and nobody knew what they were doing," said Ann Franzel, 72, Raleigh. Franzel was director of Charismatic Renewal in Raleigh before the Tuccis and has been a member of the prayer group at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Raleigh since the late '70s.

Perhaps more insidious from the Catholic leadership perspective were defectors from the church who used the movement to lead others astray. Franzel remembers the day in 1982 when the Raleigh diocesan liaison to the movement dismantled her charismatic group's leadership. The group leaders had been lambasting the Catholic church during charismatic services.

"So the bishop brought them under the umbrella of the church," Franzel said. "That's what the church has always done. They like to have people under the umbrella of the church, like to know where they are and what they're doing."

Now strict rules exist for charismatic groups. Beyond the approval of the bishop and priest, they must also hold yearly elections of officers as well as adhere to specific guidelines of what takes place at services.

"It doesn't allow bad theological ideas to come into meetings," Fukes, St. Julia's pastor, said. "For example, if somebody decides to stand up and say they have a message from God, they don't allow that anymore."

Becoming a Hispanic Movement

Charismatic Renewal operates among multiple denominations, including several Protestant faiths. It didn't originate with Hispanics. Roman Catholics took it up in 1967 at a retreat at Duquesne University, a Catholic university in Pittsburgh, Pa. The movement spread quickly.

Franzel got involved with the movement in Raleigh in 1978 before becoming director. She casually accompanied a friend to weekly charismatic meetings.

"My family was at Boy Scouts, and I just didn't want her to have to attend alone," Franzel recalled. "But then after the third week, my husband came home and told me he was leaving me."

She turned to charismatic services for support. She remembers that in the '70s and '80s large charismatic groups in places such as Chapel Hill and Cary were all Anglo. Since the movement's peak in the '80s, its popularity has declined among Catholics overall. Many of the original large groups in the Raleigh diocese have disappeared all together. But in the past 15 years, the number of Hispanic charismatic groups and Masses has increased dramatically.

The Catholic church doesn't keep official statistics on its number of charismatic worshippers, but church leaders and scholars estimate that the number of Hispanics practicing

some type of charismatic worship has almost doubled to 10 million in the past 20 years *Washington Post* staff writer Anthony Faiola reported in 2007. Tucci, the Raleigh diocese charismatic director, said it's difficult to know how many Catholics here are charismatic because people tend to come and go. She estimated that more than half have had a "charismatic experience." At the last charismatic conference in Raleigh, about 500 people attended. She said the movement draws many more Hispanics than non-Hispanics in North Carolina:

"It's more popular with Hispanics all over," Tucci said. "It's more familiar to their type of prayer – exuberant."

At St. Julia's, the charismatic prayer group attracts only Hispanics. Fukes offered several reasons for the Hispanic draw to the charismatic movement.

Hispanics tend to be more comfortable with a loose structure, for one.

"More spontaneity (exists in charismatic services)," he said. "Hispanics aren't so concerned with knowing what to expect and having everything meet their expectations, whereas English people (non-Hispanics) want to know what's going to happen."

Fukes also suspects the movement's spiritual intimacy appeals more to Hispanics.

"Hispanics are more at ease with sharing their faith," he said. "Whereas English people are more like, 'No, that's private,' and they wouldn't want to tell others what they ought to do, what is right."

"[Non-Hispanics] would be very welcome if they could feel comfortable in a Spanish atmosphere," Fukes said. "But if they wanted to form an English prayer group, I'd be fine with that, too."

So far, non-Hispanic parishioners at St. Julia's haven't expressed real interest in forming a charismatic group

Mary Grace McCoy, 41, of Silk Hope, has attended English Masses at St. Julia's for almost four years. She agreed that non-Hispanics parishioners likely won't form a charismatic group. She laughed as she recalled a priest at a different Catholic church trying to engage a non-Hispanic parish during a sermon. He wanted the congregation to exclaim "Amen!" when it agreed with him.

"We just don't do that," she said. "Most Catholics tend toward the quiet side."

Even though he doesn't attend charismatic services, Fukes sees the group as a beneficial addition to the church.

"What happens with most charismatic groups and the people involved – they get more involved in their parish, too," he said. "So that's a source of active parishioners for us."

The Canales family is evidence of Fukes' statement. Midway through the Valentine's Day charismatic Mass, as Adolfo jumped in the air and led the congregation in spirited prayer, Leidi Canales gave a half-smile, shrugged and said, "This is what I do every Sunday."

CHAPTER FOUR

Evangelical Churches on a Mission

It's Sunday morning in downtown Graham. Church bells fill the air. Along North Main and Harden streets – two prominent intersecting roads of this town of nearly 15,000 about 20 miles east of Greensboro – stand more than half a dozen Protestant churches. More pop up along side streets. Many are Baptist and Pentecostal, but Presbyterian, Methodist and Wesleyan denominations add variety.

In the red-brick chapel of First Baptist Church of Graham, Lorena Gomez reads a Bible passage aloud and in one seamless motion puts her Bible down, straps on her guitar and starts strumming. The church drummer, bass player and keyboardist join in, signaling the official start of Sunday morning "celebracion" (celebration) at Iglesia Bautista Comunidad en Cristo (Community in Christ Baptist Church).

Juan Llapa, fastidiously dressed in a light brown suit and yellow button-down shirt, holds his bilingual Bible close to his chest as he sings along. The words to the opening hymn "Santo, Santo, Santo" scroll down a large screen to the band's left. About 15 other Hispanics sing along with Llapa.

Next door in the larger main sanctuary, the all-white choir sings traditional American Protestant hymns. The organist accompanies the choir, signaling the official start to Sunday-morning worship at the First Baptist Church of Graham.

Iglesia Bautista is the only Hispanic Southern Baptist congregation in the Mt. Zion local association – a subregion of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (commonly referred to as N.C. Baptist). The Mt. Zion association covers Alamance County and parts of Orange County. In 2006, four Baptist churches in rural Alamance County started Iglesia Bautista collaboratively.

"We saw the growing Hispanic population in Alamance and the need for spreading gospel among Hispanics," said Debbie Farrell, 54, of Mebane. Farrell represents the First Baptist Church of Graham on the liaison group that works with Iglesia Bautista. The First Baptist Churches of Mebane, Elon and Burlington also sponsor Iglesia Bautista.

Hispanic missions like Iglesia Bautista cater to the growing ranks of Hispanics leaving Catholicism for evangelical faiths. According to a landmark study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2007, 15 percent of Hispanics identify as born-again or evangelical Protestants. Half of all evangelical Hispanics have gone through a conversion experience, and of those converts, more than four out of five were formerly Catholic.

Graham is a likely setting for a Hispanic Baptist mission. Seventy-five percent of North Carolinians identify themselves as Protestant, according to the Pew Forum's U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, and Baptists represent the largest Protestant denominational family nationally. North Carolina Baptist, the state association for the national Southern Baptist Convention, has nearly 4,200 congregations dispersed among 80 local associations. Nearly 130

N.C. Baptist Hispanic missions and churches exist. According to U.S. Census data, Hispanics made up 11.3 percent of Alamance County's population in 2008, up from almost 7 percent in 2000. In 2008, Hispanics made up 7.4 percent of the state's population, an 80 percent increase from 2000.

Churches with a Mission

Most N.C. Baptist Hispanic congregations are missions rather than churches. Churches are self-directed, self-funded and usually incorporated with tax-identification numbers. Missions, on the other hand, depend on sponsoring churches.

Larry Phillips, the N.C. Baptist Hispanic Ministry's senior consultant, explained three primary ways of forming a mission. Most commonly, as with Graham's Iglesia Bautista, a U.S. church decides it wants to minister to its local Hispanic community and asks the state convention to help secure funding and a Hispanic minister for a mission.

Sometimes a Hispanic pastor contacts the convention with the desire to start a mission. In that case, the convention contacts churches in that community to train the Hispanic mission in leadership development – how to set up a budget and teach Sunday School, for example – and to help with funding. Other times, the state convention independently targets an area with no Hispanic activity.

After the four Alamance County Baptist churches decided to start Iglesia Bautista, they searched for a Hispanic minister and found the Rev. Miguel Gomez. Gomez, 40, moved to California from Mexico when he was 20. After six years in California, he moved to North

Carolina. He and his wife, Lorena, moved from Raleigh to Burlington with their four children when he was hired to lead Iglesia Bautista in 2006.

Gomez said that on any given Sunday, the mission draws between 15 and 60 people. Most adult members immigrated from Central and South America. Gomez recalled members from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Personal Conversion and Choice

Llapa, who held his bilingual Bible tightly as Lorena Gomez opened Sunday-morning "celebracion," has attended Iglesia Bautista for a year. But Llapa, 49, of Burlington, said his spiritual journey began decades earlier in Ecuador. He grew up attending Mass with his family but began questioning his allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church at age 15. He felt that his priest was inattentive, and he began to distrust the church. Not until he took a walk through the Burlington mall on a December day in 1993 did his conversion really begin, though.

A woman and two younger girls approached him with an invitation to Bethlehem Wesleyan Church in Snow Camp, about 20 miles south of Burlington. Llapa, who moved to the U.S. in 1976 but was new to North Carolina, remembers being wary of the women initially. He decided to attend after the woman's husband, who spoke some Spanish, spoke to Llapa on the phone. He told Llapa that a Mexican couple attended, and they needed another Hispanic to talk to at church.

When he entered the sanctuary of Bethlehem Wesleyan Church, Llapa remembered a dream he had a week before.

"In the dream, I saw inside the church a musical band playing the gospel music, hearing all those songs, and I was seeing all those people in that church," he said. "I mean, when I go there I see just like in my dream." Llapa interpreted the dream and his subsequent invitation to the Wesleyan church as a sign from God.

"I can't believe it," he said. "The Lord called me in that way. So that was the time I been saved – my first service there."

Other than Llapa and a couple from Mexico, no other Hispanics attended Bethlehem Wesleyan in 1993. Within a year, though, Llapa helped increase the Hispanic membership. So the church found a Spanish-speaking minister and moved the Hispanic congregation to a separate building in Graham. He spoke earnestly of his role as an evangelist. Now that he attends Iglesia Bautista, he and others from the church go door to door in Hispanic neighborhoods in Alamance County, handing out literature.

"Some people are not as welcoming," he said. "But we got to because if we don't go look for souls to save, we not going to get souls coming to the church."

Personal conversion and evangelism stories such as Llapa's echo in the larger story of Hispanics' abandoning Catholicism for Protestant faiths. Miguel Gomez, Iglesia Bautista's pastor, left the Catholic church in his 20s after moving to the U.S. Personal conversion was paramount for him.

"In evangelical churches, they place a big emphasis on the personal conversion," Gomez said. "Growing up in the Catholic church and being a very active member of the Catholic church, they didn't place a big emphasis on personal conversion."

He liked having a choice as well.

"In the Catholic church in Latin America, if you are born into a Catholic family, you are already Catholic and already a Christian," he said. "I don't agree with that. You are a Christian because you get saved and become a follower of Jesus Christ," he said. Gomez's views echo those of evangelical movements generally, which emphasize the need for explicit adult commitment or conversion to the belief in Christ.

Guillermo Soriano, senior consultant for multicultural evangelism at N.C. Baptist, also left the Catholic church after moving to the U.S. He lived in Honduras until he moved to Louisiana for high school at age 14.

"I had a new beginning in Louisiana," Soriano, 55, said. "At 19, I came to know the Lord Jesus as my personal savior." His conversion did not go over well with his family.

"Later on, my dad told me that he had talked with my mom and that they believed they had lost me as their son because I had chosen a different way of faith," he said. "That's how strong Catholicism is built into the family structure of Hispanics."

The variety of religious choices in the U.S. helped spur his conversion, as it did for Gomez and Llapa.

"Part of it is I lived for almost 19 years believing that there is only one and that no other religion was worth exploring," he said.

Although Llapa, Soriano and Gomez all shifted to Protestant faiths in the U.S., Gomez thinks that pattern of conversion is changing.

"We used to have a lot of conversions here, but now we see more and more people coming already non-Catholic," he said. "They have already converted to another denomination, more specifically to an evangelical denomination."

Phillips of N.C. Baptist Hispanic ministry agreed. He said the majority of Hispanics who join N.C. Baptist churches already have some type of relationship with Protestant faiths. Some come as Southern Baptists because they were exposed to missionaries in their home countries. According to its Web site, the Southern Baptist Convention supports 5,444 missionaries worldwide.

Whether they convert in Latin America or after arriving in the U.S., Hispanic converts do not take the process lightly. According to the Pew study, 82 percent of Hispanics who have converted say they did so because they wanted a more direct, personal relationship with God. Ninety percent who became evangelical say they did so after a spiritual search.

Two Cultures Clashing

Potential for bringing together two cultures exists when an English-speaking congregation sponsors a Hispanic mission.

"In a family of 4,200 churches, in a lot of cases, a lot of them have not been exposed to other cultures," said Soriano, N.C. Baptist's multicultural director. "So when we come together, the exposure to other cultures creates a better awareness of who is here."

Often, though, this idyllic vision takes a backseat to daily, practical challenges that arise when cultures collide.

"It's two cultures in a little bit of a clash," Shannon Hall said. Hall, 40, of Mebane, is director of Family Ministries and Worship at First Baptist of Graham.

Hall described difficulties the church has encountered in sharing its space. One issue has been the church's nursery. As with many churches, the number of Hispanic babies and children

at the mission dwarfs non-Hispanic children at First Baptist of Graham. So the church offered to share its nursery.

"When I brought my 2-year-old to the nursery, recently, though, I noticed that it was becoming too big to fulfill its purpose, which is to provide childcare," Hall said. "So I decided to meet with Miguel and Lorena (the Hispanic minister and his wife) because I sensed it was causing a little bit of friction in the main congregation. We tried to help them and solve that problem and also let them know what we need."

The needs of the main non-Hispanic congregation tend to boil down to issues of control, particularly when a U.S. church contributes money and space to an Hispanic mission. Phillips, who did mission work in South America for 20 years before working for N.C. Baptist, sees these control issues play out regularly in churches statewide.

"It sets up different dynamics between the sponsoring church and mission, creates a lot of dependency and control issues," he said. "It becomes about the element of trust – how trust can be developed between both groups, how to share space, how Hispanics can use space without the North Americans feeling like they (Hispanics) are taking over."

Phillips, 62, told of problems and misunderstandings that surface commonly when American churches sponsor Hispanic missions and split the use of church facilities. He has seen Sunday School teachers in non-Hispanic congregations get upset when they find Spanish posters and materials in their classrooms. Complaints often arise about unfamiliar food smells in the fellowship hall after a Hispanic congregation prepares a meal.

The Hispanic ministry's Web site states that part of its mission is to "partner with our Hispanic family in making disciples locally and internationally." So spats over Spanish teaching materials and food smells seem petty at best, intolerant at worst.

Hall, of First Baptist of Graham, said she thinks this issue comes from deeply rooted identities in churches rather than from blatant hostility.

"I do notice that people subordinate them (Hispanics) because they are a different culture, and they aren't the important people in church," she said. "Like we are worshipping in a big sanctuary, and they are doing something lesser. That's the way it seems to be in most congregations."

Farrell, the church's liaison to Iglesia Bautista, on the other hand, was quick to deny any pushback in the main congregation toward Hispanics.

But she admitted that not everything has been rosy.

"Our biggest challenge has been our lack of understanding of Hispanic culture," she said. "We try to put the Anglo way on them, but we have to learn their ways and their priorities and let them lead."

And amid expressions of her genuine passion for working with the Hispanic mission, Farrell expressed frustration.

"The thing that was hardest for me personally," she said, "they don't get stressed out about stuff. They're just really laid back, and there's not a concept of time. I'm a very Type A person, so that has been really hard. But in a way, I admire that."

The Price of Independence

Funding Hispanic missions often exacerbates the push and pull between congregations.

"When a North American congregation funds the church, there's a feeling of 'we want to make them use it properly and use it right,'" said Phillips, N.C. Baptist's Hispanic ministry consultant.

Iglesia Bautista's four sponsoring churches have formed a graduated scale of giving. This year each church will commit $4,000 toward the mission, while the mission pays a nominal fee to Graham Baptist to use its chapel. The goal is for Iglesia Bautista to be financially independent by 2012.

This financial sponsorship has made it difficult for members of the non-Hispanic congregations to resist meddling.

"It's been really hard to step back instead of leading them and let them do what they feel their priorities are," said Farrell, the liaison between the church and mission. "It's like raising your children. You hate to watch them make mistakes."

Despite the desire to guide Iglesia Bautista, Farrell was clear that no sponsoring congregation intends to incorporate the Hispanic congregation into its own.

"We definitely want to keep it independent from other congregations," she said. "We just feel that's best."

Pressed on this point, Farrell said: "It's just the Baptist way – each church is independent, with our own constitution and bylaws. We're our own boss."

Phillips also emphasized the autonomy of each church in the Southern Baptist Convention structure, but he expressed frustration with the pervasive notion that congregations must be segregated ethnically.

"On any given Sunday in North Carolina Baptist, there are 35 different language groups worshipping."

He said N.C. Baptist now has an intentional strategy to begin multicultural and multiethnic congregations – an old idea but a new commitment. Phillips foresees resistance.

"We're pretty comfortable with the people group we identify with," he said. "It's difficult to cross barriers of communication and language. Also, how willing is the dominant culture to change to facilitate the type of interchange that needs to occur between different groups?"

At First Baptist of Graham, this type of interchange has not been a major priority.

Hall spoke of monthly Sunday breakfasts the Hispanic mission holds at the church. With the exception of her husband and son, who have made a concerted effort to reach out to the mission, no non-Hispanics attend.

"It does feel to me like it's another congregation that is doing the same things we're doing," she said. "Like we're on a parallel line, worshipping the same God in the same church but not coming together."

Farrell said that, although all sponsoring churches make a point to invite members of Iglesia Bautista to their functions, not much regular interaction occurs between the Hispanics and non-Hispanics.

"I think it's a priority to make them feel welcome and to be invited, but as far as planning events [to bring the congregations together], I think no," she said. "It's not a priority because they really want to do their own thing."

Phillips' multicultural vision for the Southern Baptist Convention goes beyond mere interactions.

"I think the majority of us, North Americans, feel that we need to do something for them, so we need to bring Hispanics to minister to Hispanics, Asians to Asians, blacks to blacks," he said. "But what would our convention look like if Hispanics were tasked with leading whites? They have a great deal to teach us. But there's resistance to that."

Dr. Edgardo Colon-Emeric, 41, of Durham, leads the Hispanic House of Worship at Duke Divinity School. He feels that traditional acceptance of ethnically, culturally and racially segregated congregations impedes the goals of churches in North Carolina. Colon-Emeric is the pastor at Reconciliation United Methodist Church in Durham. Reconciliation UMC stands apart from other churches in the area because its congregation and leadership are intentionally ethnically diverse.

Colon-Emeric said ethnic churches – such as Iglesia Bautista – serve a temporary purpose.

"Ethnic churches can be like a section rehearsal where you learn your part instead of being absorbed into the majority," he said. "But it should not lose sight of being a section rehearsal. And that's where I fear many of our churches are stuck – Pentecostal, Protestant and Catholic."

Perhaps Iglesia Bautista and its sponsoring churches – along with the growing number of Hispanic Protestant congregations in North Carolina – are simply making their way around the inevitable learning curve that comes with the delicate process of cultural integration.

"We're not going to arrive at a utopian state," Colon-Emeric said. "No – it's a struggle. But it's a struggle worth having."

Sidebar

Churches Take a Stand on Immigration

In almost any discussion about Hispanics in the U.S., immigration surfaces. According to the Pew Research Center and the 2008 American Community Survey, nearly 40 percent of the 47 million Hispanics living in the U.S. are foreign-born. President Obama has said that his administration will begin pursuing an overhaul of the current immigration system this year, but many immigration activists decry the administration's slow progress. Churches figure prominently into the immigration debate. Many denominations have issued official public statements:

- Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.: In January 2010, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a statement urging Congress to pass humane and comprehensive immigration reform. It announced the launch of a nationwide postcard campaign and two new Web sites to assist parishes in pushing for immigration reform: www.justiceforimmigrants.org and the National Migration Week Web site at www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw/index.shtml.
- National Association for Evangelicals (NAE): NAE encompasses 40 evangelical denominations. In October 2009, its board of directors approved a resolution recommending comprehensive immigration reform that treats immigrants with respect and mercy. Key elements included the reduction in backlog for family reunifications, secure national borders with "respect for human dignity," the application of fair labor and civil laws for immigrants, and a "sound, equitable" process to allow undocumented immigrants to earn legal status.

- Southern Baptist Convention (SBC): Although the SBC has official position statements on issues such as women in the ministry, sexuality and abortion, it has not published a position statement on immigration. In 2006, it issued a resolution called "On the Crisis of Illegal Immigration." Its focus was enforcement of immigration laws and border protection rather than protection of immigrants. In addition to calling for national borders to be secured, the resolution reminded evangelicals to care for the needy and to evangelize immigrants.
- United Methodist Church (UMC): In 2000, the UMC adopted a resolution declaring the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which made it easier for authorities to deport immigrants, "evil and unjust." In this resolution, UMC also called for the development of an amnesty program for undocumented immigrants. In February 2009, UMC organized more than 100 prayer vigils to support immigration reform.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflection

This thesis topic came about unexpectedly. I began brainstorming thesis topics during the first semester of graduate school. In the year that followed, I darted from one topic to another, trying to stick to one that I thought was important, interesting and not overdone. Hispanic immigration in North Carolina interested me from the start, but I could not think of a fresh angle that was possible with my limited resources. So I chose a completely different topic in the first month of my second year.

But to satisfy an intellectual curiosity of mine, I chose to conduct weekly observations at St. Julia's for a sociology class that semester. I am from a rural county in eastern Tennessee, and I am interested in Hispanic immigrants. So my original desire was to observe a site in a rural area in which Hispanic immigrants and non-Hispanic members of the community interacted with one other. I wasn't sure what I was looking to find exactly, but my curiosity compelled me. I went to St. Julia's ready to take notes on how the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parishioners interacted with one another. From there, I intended to analyze what those interactions said about Hispanic and non-Hispanic relations in the wider community.

So I was a bit stumped after the first few weeks of observations when it became clear to me that I would not be seeing a lot, if any, interaction between these groups at St. Julia's. With

rare exceptions, Hispanic parishioners stuck to themselves and non-Hispanic parishioners stuck to themselves. I waited in the church courtyard after services, pencil poised to jot down details in my spiral notebook, hoping to glimpse exchanges as the groups came and went from their respective services. But nothing.

I soon realized that the *lack* of interaction between the two groups was a big part of St. Julia's story. A bit nervous about bringing up this issue, I interviewed Audrey Schwankl, the non-Hispanic parishioner featured in the first article. I anticipated reticence on her part about issues of ethnic segregation at St. Julia's. Within 15 minutes, though, she was talking extensively about how the two groups of parishioners no longer interact and how she felt the church was failing to accomplish its mission of bringing together the Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities. I sensed these issues had been weighing on her a while.

My second interview for the class was with Isidra Benitez, a Hispanic parishioner. She sleepily greeted me at her home on a November morning, having forgotten that we had scheduled the interview. She had finished working the night shift at a factory a few hours earlier and had just sent her children off to school. She had only a few hours to rest before her kids came home and she had to go back to work. Nonetheless, she was happy to talk to me about St. Julia's. During our interview, she began talking about the charismatic group. This was the first time I heard about the charismatic movement. The emotion in her voice made it clear that this group played a big role in the life of her family and other Hispanics.

She mentioned that some of her friends had left St. Julia's for local Pentecostal churches. That was the first time I heard about Hispanics leaving Catholicism for evangelical faiths. It immediately fascinated me. I imagined the rural Pentecostal and evangelical churches in my hometown and tried to imagine Hispanics attending them. The potential for the rich cultural

dynamics taking place in such a setting captivated me. Then on the hour-long drive from Benitez's house in Ramseur to my apartment in Carrboro, I passed at least three Pentecostal churches with signs in Spanish. Had these churches been here on my drive to Ramseur? Was this a fluke, or had I just been oblivious to this religious movement taking place right under my nose in North Carolina for the past two years?

When I got home, I began Googling "Latinos and Pentecostal churches." Many news stories about Hispanics abandoning the Catholic church came up. I looked in the yellow pages for churches in Orange, Chatham and Alamance counties and saw at least a dozen with such names as "Palabra de Dios" and "Iglesia Pentecostal de Jesucristo Poder de Dios." I was intrigued but chagrined to see that the latter church was about four miles down the road from my apartment. At that moment, I decided I had to change my thesis topic. I wanted to know more. It was late in the semester, but there was still room to maneuver. Fortunately, my adviser supported my decision, and interviews came easily.

The reporting process for this thesis was stimulating. It forced me to get out of my comfort zone. I'm not Catholic, I don't attend church regularly, and my blond hair, blue eyes and fair skin make me stick out like a sore thumb at any Hispanic event. I secretly looked forward to attending the First Baptist Church of Graham – an all-white Protestant church – relieved by the prospect that I would be in familiar territory. I would blend in and be anonymous while observing. My illusion was immediately shattered upon approaching the steps to the front door of the church that morning. As I walked up the steps, a man and woman speaking to each other near the door saw me, stopped their conversation and watched me curiously. When I got to the door, the woman smiled widely, held out her hand and, almost exclaimed in a Southern drawl,

"Why, honey, who are yoooouuu?" This welcome set the tone for the entire service, in which people came up to me to find out who I was.

A few times I left my apartment, bound for a Spanish charismatic service or other event where I would not know anyone and likely would not be able to speak to or understand most people, thinking, "Why do I like to put myself in awkward situations?" Within five minutes of being at any of these services, though, it was obvious why I chose "awkward" situations over comfortable ones. They challenge me and keep me from getting bored. They're just more interesting. It also occurred to me why the issue of Hispanics and religions is probably an underreported story – because it's not comfortable, especially for non-Hispanic journalists.

But everyone, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic made me feel very welcome. They offered me seats, made sure I knew where I was and were more than happy to talk to me.

Religion is tricky to report on. Several friends at UNC-Chapel Hill said things like, "It's better that you're doing this story than I" or "Religion makes me so uncomfortable. I wouldn't want to write about it." On one hand, I know where they were coming from. Religion is personal, and when people's religious views differ greatly from your own, it can lead to challenges in relating and communicating. For example, it became obvious during my interview with Guillermo Soriano of N.C. Baptist that his intentions went beyond giving me information. He wanted to evangelize to me. As I sat in his office, asking questions about N.C. Baptist churches, he often veered off to quote Scripture or read the Bible to me. He asked me which church I attended, and he even asked me if he could pray with me, right there in his office.

These instances made me a little uncomfortable, but they didn't deter me. Nor did they offend me. I was honest with Soriano. I told him from the outset that I was writing articles about Hispanics and religion. I was only interviewing him. I told him that I did not attend

church regularly, and I wasn't interested in finding a church. I politely but firmly turned down his request to pray with me, but I let him know I was interested in the religious experiences of Hispanics, and I wanted to report the story fairly.

Many people filter their worldview through religious beliefs. And Hispanics in particular rely on the church for more than just spiritual needs. Their church is often the center of their community and life in the U.S. So it's absolutely critical that journalists not be discouraged from reporting on these types of religious experiences.

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